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SOCIAL SERVICE

FOR

YOUNG PEOPLE

WHAT IS IT?

Prepared for the Commission on the
Church and Social Service of the
Federal Council of the Churches
of Christ in America

BY

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THE COMMISSION ON THE CHURCH
AND SOCIAL SERVICE

SOCIAL SERVICE

SOCIAL service is that form of effort for man's betterment which seeks to uplift and transform his associated and community life. There are also some forms of service to the social needs of the individual which may properly be called social service. Social service adds to the effort to help the individual lives of people the effort to establish proper conditions for the development of those lives. It adds to the relief of the poor and the sick and the prisoner the effort to discover and remove the causes of poverty and disease and crime. Its goal is social salvation, "the deliverance of human society from disease, poverty, crime, and misery; the development and perfection of the institutions of men's associated life; and the construction of a social order that is the city of God on earth."

HISTORICAL.

THE social-service movement is no new thing in organized Christianity. The fires of Pentecost kindled a mighty passion to help all human need that soon resulted in organized service. The first Christians met by common action every need of their group, and the organized ministrations of the early church to the needs of the age were the marvel of Roman historians. In the ministry of Jesus much time was devoted to doing good and to the relief of suffering. His opening proclamation announces a mission to the needs of neglected individuals and groups—the poor, the captives, the blind, the bruised. His standard of judgment is that of service to the sick, the poor, the prisoner. His whole thought of religion is social; it is the kingdom, the fatherhood, the brotherhood.

Here Jesus fulfilled the law and the prophets. He was the successor of those men who revealed God in terms of justice and righteousness in the community life, who denounced the injustice and oppres-

sion of the rich, who sought to build a community life with God all through it.

Every great awakening in the church has emphasized the social nature of Christianity by its results in social service. Our modern programme of philanthropy and of social and labor legislation was started in the Evangelical Revival. The great missionary awakening of the last generation developed city evangelism, the settlement, and the institutional church. The attempt to minister to the whole life of the young people of the slums developed into the wider programme of removing those social and industrial conditions which are behind the slum and its imperfect lives.

Then the present social-service movement in the churches was organized with thirty denominations joining together through the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America behind a common social platform and with organized agencies in the leading denominations co-operating with other social-service agencies to develop plans and secure the measures that will carry out this

creed. This means that every church will be a socialized church, developing a ministry to its community as well as to the individuals around it, concerned with poverty and disease and delinquency, with civic and industrial conditions. In this socialized church every department must have a social-service programme.

What shall be the part and place of the Young People's Societies?

SOCIAL STUDY.

SERVICE to be successful must be intelligent. To be intelligent it must be based upon a knowledge of accepted principles and methods.

Many young people who cannot be induced to join a study-class may yet be enlisted in a reading-course, especially if those who are reading the books in the course are gathered together occasionally for a social hour and for discussion. Every society should have its own social-service library, so that the books may be passed around freely. A list of books can be supplied, which cannot fail to catch and hold the interest of young people, because they deal with typical American conditions from an intimate, personal standpoint.

Another popular form of education which can be made use of is the Open Forum for the presentation of community issues. At this meeting representatives of various groups in the community may be heard at first hand, and the form of communication by question and answer may be used to establish a closer sympathy between speaker and audience.

COMMUNITY STUDY.

ANY programme of social service for the individual or the group must be based upon the needs of the local community. Therefore these must be discovered. The only way to discover them is to make a study of local conditions, which will outline the field of needed activity.

Before any work is attempted the society must know also what agencies are already at work to meet the needs of the community, and how they are doing it, in order that the society's efforts may not duplicate the work of other societies, but supplement it. A chart can be made and placed on the wall of the church, showing the agencies which will help in caring for poverty, sickness, or delinquency, or in meeting any civic or social emergency.

It is not advisable or even possible for the Young People's Society to make a thorough study of the whole community, especially in the larger centres. In a community of ten thousand or fewer, however, it may be possible to get a good general view of conditions; but even in this case the effort should be confined to the

things in which young people are naturally interested. This will limit the study and activity, and concentrate the effort on a few things. Any society may well limit itself to discovering and improving the conditions of life for the young people of the community. This will include conditions of social life and recreation, conditions of education, conditions of health and housing and of occupation.

The following schedule of questions will give assistance to the society in studying its own community:

What Every Society Should Know About Its Own Community.

Poverty and Delinquency:

What charitable agencies exist? Their general efficiency? Any co-operation between them?

Approximate amount spent for relief in one year, and number of cases helped?

What relief work is done by churches? Is there co-operation between the different departments of the individual church? With other churches? With other charitable agencies?

What city, county, or State provision for relief of poverty or sickness is there in the community? Does anybody inspect these institutions for efficiency?

Social Life and Recreation:

What organized recreation is provided? In schools, churches, Young Men's Christian Association, etc.

What amusements are operated for private profit? General character? Any that are flagrantly vicious?

What educational facilities are there for young people who wish to continue their education while working? Night-schools? Special classes in the Young Men's Christian Association and Young Women's Christian Association? Lecture courses? Are these facilities efficient?

Health and Housing:

Death-rate? Infant mortality? Compared with neighboring communities?

Does the health department control contagious diseases? Does it educate the community to measures of prevention?

Is any part of the town living in unsanitary or congested houses?

What laws are there relating to such conditions, and how are they enforced?

Labor:

How many young people over sixteen are wage-earners in the community? Where do they work? How many work more than ten hours? More than nine hours? Eight hours? How many on Sunday? How many girls are working nights?

What are the wages of the lowest-paid group? Young men? Young women? Is there a minimum-wage law in the State, and is it enforced? Average wage in the various industries in the community? How does it compare with the cost of living in that place?

What are the conditions of health in the community's industries? What labor laws in the State? Do they protect the worker, and to what extent? Is there a system of factory inspection, and is it enforced? What is done to help young people find employment?

Government:

What form of government? Who are the officers? What are their functions, and what power have they? What are the forces that really control?

What departments of the local government most vitally affect the welfare of the community?

What co-operation is there between the church group and these departments?

HOW TO BEGIN.

A GOOD way to begin is for the Christian-citizenship committee to make a general study of the community according to this schedule, modifying the schedule to fit local needs, and striking out such questions as are not applicable. This information should then be classified and worked up in the form of charts, so that it may be presented to the whole society in graphic fashion. The stereopticon can be used to good advantage in this part of the work.

From this general study the members may select that particular condition which appears to call most urgently for action. When this has been done, a more detailed study of that condition should be made before anything is done to meet the need.

In the case of city societies the district should be defined, and other young people's groups should if possible be enlisted in the effort.

MAKING THE WORK CONSTRUCTIVE.

Relief Work. The practical work of the society cannot be called social service until it becomes constructive and preventive as well as palliative. Social service is not content to relieve without at the same time investigating the causes of distress and seeking to remove them.

The very first principle of relief work is co-operation, co-operation within the church itself, seeing that one organization does not duplicate the work of another; co-operation with other churches of the same denomination and of other denominations; and co-operation with agencies outside the church, especially with the organized charities of the community.

The second principle is quite as important; there should be continuity of service. Spasmodic help will not only do little good, but may work harm. Whatever work may be selected, it should not be dropped until it has been carried through to completion and there is no further need of it. It is much better to select a permanent problem, and give attention

to that, than to attempt many different pieces of work, doing only a little of each. For instance, if help is given to a family, it should be helped continuously until the members are able to care for themselves; not receive a basket at Thanksgiving or Christmas time and be left to itself the remainder of the year.

Nearly every society has among its members one or more young women who are able to give a good deal of time to visitation and other relief work. These should be trained as friendly visitors in the community, so that their services may be guided and directed in such a way as will make it doubly valuable. The local charity organization will accept such volunteer help and give the desired training.

Work for the Sick. Where there is a hospital in the community, many small services may be performed for the patients, especially for those in the free wards. Religious services may be held. Reading-matter may be provided, and some one may be assigned to read aloud a certain amount of time each week. Letters may be written; often in the con-

valescent wards a programme of music and readings will be appreciated. Many unions of Young People's Societies are doing excellent work along these lines through their hospital department.

If there are dispensaries, social-service work may be carried on by a system of following up the patients to see that the physician's orders are carried out and that the patients are provided with the means of procuring what is prescribed, and to improve the home conditions so that further illness may be prevented.

Rural societies may provide fruit and flowers for the sick in the city by co-operating with the city societies. Express companies will usually carry such gifts free of charge.

Work for the sick must not end with relief. It must be extended until it looks also to the prevention of illness and to the aggressive advocating of public-health measures. The local health department will be glad of volunteer help in spreading knowledge concerning its plans for sanitation and the proper care of disease, in reporting violations of health laws, in

distributing literature dealing with public health, in its effort to eliminate improper housing-conditions, and in the effort to enforce the health laws of the community.

Aiding the Prisoner. Young People's Societies have been organized in the prisons and penitentiaries in more than a score of States, and are doing most efficient service. In other places stated religious services are held. Reading-matter may be distributed in the jails; and, if this service is attempted, it should be systematic and continuous. And such reading-matter should be fresh and interesting. Out-of-date church papers will not interest the people usually found in jails.

Find out whether the prisoners have employment. If not, insist that something be given them to do for a reasonable number of hours six days in the week. Interest the judges and officers of the law in helping to secure modern equipment and modern methods of handling prisoners. Co-operate with organizations that care for the prisoners after they are discharged.

SOCIALIZING THE SOCIAL DEPARTMENT.

IN every community there are groups of young people who are not touched or brought into contact in any way with the young people in the church societies. Every society should make an effort to get into contact with these.

Homeless Young People. Take, for instance, that increasing number of young men and women in the cities who are away from home, without the restraints of their former environment, and without proper social life in their new surroundings. Practical help may take the form of finding proper boarding-places and getting these homeless ones invited into Christian homes to spend Sunday, so that they may have a touch of home life. The social hour after church, and the fireside social Sunday afternoon from four to six, at which light refreshments are served, have been used as a weapon against the loneliness and dangers of that hour.

Young People from Abroad. Then there are the immigrant young men and women. If America is to care for the new peoples

who are drawn in such numbers by the promise of a greater liberty, it will be only as the American young people, and especially those of the churches, see in these groups an opportunity for splendid service. Suspicion and prejudice toward those of another race will never be disarmed until the young people meet face to face and find out for themselves the essential unity of the race.

Classes in English and civics afford a good opportunity for getting acquainted. There are now a number of books designed for the purpose of teaching foreigners in simple, untechnical fashion, so that any ordinarily well-educated person may successfully lead such a class.

The national social, in which the various groups of foreigners furnish the entertainment by appearing in native costumes and giving exhibitions of the manners and customs of their own countries, is another excellent means of getting acquainted. In the cities where these foreign groups have their own editors, singers, and other leaders, these will usually gladly aid in an enterprise of this kind.

Devise your own methods for extending the circle of friendship outside the church group. The essential thing is to come into vital contact with the young people of other nationalities in the community, for this will open the way to larger forms of service to the immigrant group.

Recreation for All. Has your society a consistent and persistent programme of recreation, or does it merely give a "social" occasionally? A well-planned programme, covering the half-year season, will yield far more satisfactory results than a haphazard effort to furnish recreation. The plans should be extended to include every possible group in the community. The autumn season may begin with informal "welcome" receptions to the various groups who have been away for the summer, teachers, students, etc.; and the programme for this period may take many forms, such as musical and literary evenings.

Education, especially in the city, may be combined with recreation by making visits in groups to various places of in-

terest in the city. This is a particularly good plan for Saturday afternoons in the summer, when the trip may end with a picnic or social of some kind out-of-doors.

The Rural Society. The rural society has quite as many advantages as the city society when it comes to planning for organized recreation. Here, as in the city, there may be musical evenings, debates, moving pictures, and athletics for the winter season; in addition, the rural society may plan in the summer for such events as the community fair, patterned after the county-fair idea, giving prizes for the best flowers, fruits, samples of cooking, hand-work, etc., and arranged by the young people themselves.

Combining education and recreation is easy in the country community, for there are fewer attractions than in the city, and such events are more likely to succeed. The State university and the agricultural schools will usually co-operate in furnishing lectures on various subjects.

The pageant and the festival for national holidays or other times can be used by both city and country societies, but the country society will have some advantages over the city group.

FRESH-AIR WORK.

CITY and rural societies may work together in planning for fresh-air and summer-vacation work, as is being done by many unions of Young People's Societies. The district may be organized, and a list of the farmhouses secured where young people from the city will be taken for short periods at moderate rates. The city society may furnish the names of young people who would be benefited by a vacation on a farm, but who cannot afford summer-resort prices.

Another plan which can be worked to advantage is for the rural societies to organize summer camps by furnishing the place and the equipment for the camp. The city group may pay the running-expenses by appointing a club to handle this part of it, making the rates cover the operating-expenses of the venture. The good accomplished does not stop with the individuals benefited; it will establish as well a working acquaintanceship between city and rural societies, which is sure to result in further successful ventures together.

Organized recreation by means of these and other methods is taking an increasingly large place in the work of Young People's Societies. But, as these societies continue to develop plans for the recreation of their own members and as many others as they can reach, they will discover that the combined efforts of all the young people, and of all the older people even, cannot reach all the individuals in the community. There will be groups, especially in the larger centres, that remain untouched.

How is the society to help here? It will first reveal the need of community recreation, by lectures, by pictures, by charts, by contact with conditions; and then it will work for the broader programme of community recreation by means of public parks, playgrounds, and social centres, all properly supervised and directed, in the meantime doing its full share of the work of supplying wholesome fun for as many of the community as it can reach.

Recreation and Social Purity. No society will be content to provide whole-

some amusement without the effort to prevent improper types. And the prevention of improper recreation will lead to the problem of organized vice, for the two are inseparable. The public dance-halls, the amusement-parks, and the excursion-steamers are recruiting-stations for the dealers in commercialized vice.

The first step in prevention is to understand that a segregated district in any community is unnecessary, that it remains only because of the consent of the community. It cannot be too emphatically stated that segregation as a policy is no longer considered necessary or even sound. This stand is taken not only by the religious forces, but by social workers and progressive thinkers the country over. This distinctly new attitude is the result of the scientific investigations made within the last few years by specially selected commissions in various parts of the country.

If there is a segregated district in your community, why should it continue to exist? If it continues, it means assuredly that some girls and boys must be sacri-

ficed. The young people of the community should be interested to see that no girls are drawn into that life.

The second step is education in personal standards. Commercialized vice can be rooted out as soon as the community wills. But the only way in which the social evil will be eradicated entirely will be by the recognition of the single standard of morality. The influence of Christian young people should be thrown on the side of the single standard and everything that makes for it.

The society will lend its influence in the suppression of songs, pictures, and literature that may be suggestive, and will avoid in every way anything that may tend toward evil thoughts. Conscientious young women will avoid extreme fashions in dress, which are usually not only lacking in modesty and utility, but inartistic as well.

Notices should be placed in the public buildings of the community directing young people going into the city to apply for information and direction only to officials in uniform. Societies in the smaller

towns and cities may see that their members who are moving into the larger centres are put in touch with the city societies through the introduction department of the Young People's Societies.

Christianizing Industry. The modern church has started on the task of making industry Christian. The young people of the churches will find their share of this task in endeavoring to improve the conditions under which young people are now working. The most pressing need is for legislation concerning the hours of work and the creation of minimum-wage boards. If there are no such laws, work for them. Whether the effort shall be for an eight, nine, or ten-hour law will depend upon how far advanced your State is and what the industrial group is fighting for.

Find out where and under what conditions the young people of your community are working—in factories, stores, laundries, telephone exchanges. It is frequently possible by arousing sentiment in a community to secure the immediate improvement of conditions by bringing local influence and pressure to bear on employ-

ers without waiting for the slow process of legislation. If satisfactory laws already exist, help to get them enforced.

The rural society may concern itself with the conditions of agricultural labor. The work of women on the farm needs to be made lighter, more attractive, and more enjoyable. The Agricultural Department at Washington, as well as the State agricultural school will furnish many suggestions that will aid in making farm life more profitable as well as more interesting. Community gatherings for the open discussion of ways and means may be made the occasion of social as well as educational meetings.

GOOD GOVERNMENT.

WHEN the society sets out earnestly to improve community conditions, whether it be in recreation, industry, or health, it will not go very far before it will find that it must work through the government. Members of Young People's Societies must learn that real citizenship entails a larger responsibility than going to the polls occasionally and casting a vote. The presentation in the Sunday-evening meetings of subjects that will enlighten the young people concerning the local government and its management will therefore be of more than passing value.

The society will provide for the public discussion of all measures which touch the community welfare, and especially measures concerning the lives of young people.

A pre-legislation institute has been worked with success. This institute consists of a full discussion of all the important measures which are to come up at the pending session of the State legis-

lature, by prominent men and women who are qualified to speak on the proposed legislation.

Another plan which tends toward good citizenship is the ceremony for first voters. Arrange for the presentation of certificates of citizenship to those who are about to vote for the first time, including immigrants who have just taken out naturalization papers. Speeches may be made by the leading officials of the community, music furnished by the school children, and the occasion made a community social event. At such meetings it may be possible to secure members for classes in citizenship.

In some communities a junior government has been organized, in which a group of young people elect some of their number to fill offices similar to those held in the local government. These junior officers become auxiliaries to the regular officials, assisting them in every way, and using the other young people as auxiliary forces to this end. In aiding the health department there has been organized in some places a junior sanitary police to in-

spect the health conditions of the community and to endeavor to secure the observance of health ordinances.

Every society should have on the wall of its meeting-place a directory of public servants—Senators, Representatives (both State and national), aldermen, county commissioners, members of the school board, and others. Then, when it is desired to bring the influence of the members to bear on officials who have certain measures under consideration, the names and addresses will be easily accessible to all.

CONCLUSION.

Finally, the members of Young People's Societies should see that anything they may be able to do is only a small part of a mighty movement, which is only in its initial stage in the churches and in the whole of modern life. This movement is arousing the religious passion for service and applying that impulse to the redemption and construction of society. It is evangelizing the whole life of human-

ity, and there is need for every Christian to consecrate himself to this great task of Christianizing the social order.

Social service literature relating to the problems considered in this leaflet may be obtained on application to the Federal Council Commission on the Church and Social Service, 105 East 22d Street, New York.

